

S-3 Mid-Cruise Lessons Learned

No matter how much foresight and preparation is used before deployment, the addition of over 1,300 personnel to the ship can cause growing pains. To successfully integrate with these extra personnel, the division remained flexible and learned to accept the changes in the amount of personnel and new requirements that came with the Marine onload. The S-3 Division only had a few minor issues with operational hours in regards to the Marines.

Right away you will face the problems of augmentation. We took big strides to prevent any problems in this area in the underway periods prior to the deployment. A plan was discussed which showed what was to be expected of the Marines on the deployment. However, the information needed to be stressed again when the deployment began. The Marines will not want to give up the correct number of personnel, but persistence is the key. It must be stressed that the Marines TAD to S-3 are 100% TAD. They are not to be pulled to stand watch, or go to the numerous formations and training sessions that they have. And, most importantly, they are to follow the S-3 chain of command, and not get swayed by their squad leader or Sergeant. There will be a LCPL in the office everyday, saying that his "Gunny" wants him to do this or that, guaranteed.

Retail sales will be great during the crossing. We examined our port schedule and decided to have a sale before we hit our first port. The schedule had us in port over the next three paydays, so we wanted to get some sales revenue before the crew emptied their pockets ashore. We found that Digital Cameras were a huge success. We reordered three times before our first month was over. There is going to be items that you didn't think to stock up on, because the historical data does not support the need. For example, the "No Snuff" policy onboard that was in affect for at least two years was lifted prior to departing on deployment. With no previous sales numbers, we could not determine the usage. We had to increase our quantities on the first two LOGREQ's to cover the demand. Also, with the addition of the self-service laundry, the rate that you will sell detergent will be staggering. This is one item that you should have shipped to Pier 4 for delivery during deployment. Also Snapple, bottled water and other non-carbonated drinks, except for Gatorade, should be considered due to not being listed in CARGO. Deploy with as much of these items as you can stock! Finally, the SH's knowledge of the previous deployments onboard will help you plan and load out items that sold well.

Due to the time difference, you will notice a lag time to get AT&T phone cards activated. Plan ahead on this and allow a full 24 to 36 hours to receive the activation confirmation. This is especially difficult on Friday a big sales day for the weekend phone call.

There is only one item that I would not recommend taking on deployment. The Boyland Soda distributed by Lindsey Phillips Marketing does not ride well in the storeroom. It is very unstable and will burst when attempting to move it. We had good success with this product in the Norfolk area, but should not be taken over open seas.

The laundry operation must have a strong-willed and aggressive First Class Petty Officer or senior Second Class with strong leadership skills as the laundry supervisor. The supervisor must be able to use good training techniques for the ever-changing TAD Marines. These traits are a must for smooth and claim-free laundry evolutions.

The problem with unstenciled clothing will be a never-ending nightmare. Just when you thought all of the clothes had been either stenciled or rejected due to no stencil, one will show up laundered and no name to return it to. Positive control and good counts of all garments should be maintained at all times. The Wardroom Mess, CPO Mess, and all divisions onboard should assign one responsible individual to check laundry in and out. Their signature should be LEDGEABLE, because once it leaves the laundry spaces it becomes their responsibility. Also, the FSA's will not always be 100% accurate in the returning process, either. The FSA's rotate every 30 to 60 days, so just when they figure out where everyone lives, they are replaced by a new FSA.

Have an officer sign for a complete inventory of barber and cleaning supplies for the Troop Barbershop. On the initial turnover of the space and keys, it should be stressed to him that the barbers should have enough supplies to last them for at least a few months. Otherwise, they will take the items to their berthing and ask for more. The Marines will always be giving haircuts (average time between cuts is three days). A Sergeant was put in charge of the space, and he is responsible for its operation and cleanliness.

From our first port visit, S-3 Division learned the following:

- Bring 8 tri-wall boxes and 6 pieces of 4X8 plywood on deployment to use as tables for the vendors. They are higher than a regular table, but are easier to strike below than some tables and the tri-wall doubles as storage space that the vendor will inevitably ask you about. The quarterdeck was near the vendor's stations, so we did not have to post a watch on the boxes. Additional security is provided by laying the plywood on top of the tri-walls then running tape across the top at the end of each day.
- If manpower permits, assign 2 personnel to the vending operation. If the ship is in 4 duty sections put them in 1 and 3, or 2 and 4. This worked out to two days apiece to have coverage for all days in port. This was essential, because the frequency of usage of the machines did not go down. In fact, cash collected went up due to the reduced hours that the mess decks were open in port.
- Take the ship's store operator(s) off the watchbill from 0800-1600 to run the outlet. We saw dramatic sales in port when Marines worked until 1500. Also, last minute requests for emblematic stock for tours and other people that visited made the operator reopen the store after hours. Try to have everyone (i.e. CO, XO, MWR, PAO, etc.) buy a surplus stock of items that they may need prior to a port visit. This is the only way the operator(s) will enjoy their liberty.
- Ensure that the AT&T cards machine is **full** before getting into port. We saw the biggest use of the machine while pier side.

- Make your CCA a floater. He must be willing to work half days, even when he is on liberty. The store needs cash tills, vending machines need collecting, and the dollar bill changer must be refilled daily (if not twice).

The Food Service Division incorporated the concept of continuous feeding on the mess decks during the deployment. This idea effected the sales in the retail outlets, but differently than what was passed to me during turnover with the WASP. The WASP saw a decline in sales for a brief time, then after the “newness” wore off the sales picked back up. Interrogative, our sales dropped off underway, especially in the soda area, due to the availability of food and drink on the mess decks. If an individual got hungry, instead of coming to the store for a snack, he could go to the mess decks and grab a plate. We saw increased retail sales IN PORT. While in port, the mess decks ran set meal hours, so the availability of food was reduced.